

2.3 LAND USE

This section discusses existing generalized land use patterns throughout the three focus areas. Existing land use data were collected through analysis of aerial photography and review of existing studies and plans. Land uses within the study area consist mainly of undeveloped/open space lands with cities/towns interspersed throughout the area. These urbanized areas include residential, commercial, military, and industrial areas as well as numerous airports. Low-density rural residences also can be found throughout the study area.

2.3.1 Existing Land Use

Mogollon Rim Focus Area

This focus area consists of Navajo County, Apache County, and Gila County. There are eight major cities/towns including the towns of Snowflake, Taylor, Pinetop-Lakeside and the City of Show Low in Navajo County; the towns of Springerville and Eager and the City of St. Johns in Apache County; and the Town of Payson in Gila County. These areas typically have dense populations resulting in various forms of development including commercial, employment, residential, and mixed uses.

Three national parks occur within the Focus Area: (1) Apache Sitgreaves National Forest, (2) Petrified Forest National Park, and (3) Tonto National Forest. The Apache Sitgreaves National Forest stretches over portions of all three counties within the Focus Area. The large amount of forest land supports a range of land uses and activities including timber production and recreational opportunities such as hiking, camping, and fishing. A large section of Petrified Forest National Park, which contains one of the world's largest and most colorful concentrations of petrified wood, is located in the northern portion of the study area. The park covers 93,533 acres, with elevations ranging from 5,300 to 6,235 feet. A section of US 180 passes through the park's southern boundary (Arizona State Parks, 2008).

Two state parks are located within this focus area: Lyman Lake State Park and the Fool Hollow Lake Recreation Area. Located along US 180 11 miles south of St. Johns, the 1,200-acre Lyman Lake State Park features camping, water activities, and hiking. The lake is replenished by snowmelt from the slopes of Baldy Peak and Escudilla Mountain, the second and third highest mountains in Arizona. The 800-acre Fool Hollow Lake Recreation Area is located northwest of Show Low, between the SR 61, SR 77, and SR 260 conjunction. The recreation area falls within the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest and offers year-round opportunities for camping, fishing, boating, and wildlife viewing.

Industrial uses within the focus area range from coal-fired power plants, power generating stations, and utility transmission lines. The main industrial use in this focus area is Arizona's only pulp and paper mill, the Snowflake Paper Mill, is located on a 640-acre site 15 miles west of Snowflake and Taylor and Precision Pine and Timber maintains a sawmill in the Heber area.

This Focus Area also includes aviation uses such as the Payson Airport, Show Low Municipal Airport, Taylor Airport, St. Johns Industrial Airpark, and Springerville Municipal Field (Arizona Department of Commerce, 2007). Detailed information about aviation is in Section 2.2.7.